
Government of the District of Columbia



Executive Office of the Mayor

Testimony of
Mayor Anthony A. Williams

***“DHS Terrorism Preparedness Grants:
Risk-Based or Guess-Work?”***

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Representative Peter T. King, Chair
Representative Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member

June 21, 2006
DRAFT

Room 311
Canon House Office Building
Washington, DC
10:00 A.M.

Good morning Chairperson King, Ranking Member Thompson, members of the Committee, staff, and members of the public. I am Anthony A. Williams, Mayor of the District of Columbia. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the subject of federal homeland security grants, a topic that is of vital importance to the District of Columbia.

In order to discuss the allocation of federal homeland security grants, it is important to understand the context in which they are used. Prior to September 11, 2001, we had responded to disasters and supported major events within the District of Columbia and throughout our metropolitan region, known as the National Capital Region. But like it did for everyone else in America and in much of the rest of the world, 9/11 signified a new day, and with that new day came a requirement for a new and significantly heightened level of capability. This requirement was especially true here in the region, where one of the hijacked planes struck its intended target; and here in the District, where the fourth plane was likely heading. Soon thereafter, the targeting of the nation's capital via anthrax attacks further demonstrated the risk faced by the District of Columbia.

We responded quickly and aggressively. In the District, aided by \$168.8 million in Congressionally appropriated funds, we enhanced existing and developed new capabilities to respond to terrorist attacks. We upgraded our operations centers and response plans; we established new emergency functions for law enforcement, fire and rescue, and health; we purchased equipment for and provided training to our first responders; we expanded our radio network coverage so that it would work inside of buildings and underground in the Metro system stations and tunnels.

In the region, I joined with the governors of Maryland and Virginia in developing and signing a joint statement to pursue *Eight Commitments to Action* to improve coordination in preventing, preparing for and responding to a terrorist incident. By endorsing the *Eight Commitments*, we established a Senior Policy Group to provide policy and executive level focus to the region's homeland security concerns and to ensure full integration of regional activities with statewide efforts in the District, Virginia, and Maryland. This group was given the collective mandate to determine priority actions for increasing regional preparedness and response capabilities and reducing vulnerability to terrorist attacks.

The District as a city and state, and as part of the National Capital Region, has since been steadily building capability to help us prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from a terrorist attack or natural disaster. We have had opportunity to put that capability to the test many times since, via planned events such as the Presidential Inauguration, State of the Union addresses, World Bank/IMF meetings, as well as via unplanned events, such as Hurricane Isabel and the sniper attacks.

Department of Homeland Security Grant Funds

The Department of Homeland Security, since its inception in 2003, has aided us in improving our preparedness in the District and in the region, including through the allocation of grant funds. The following table summarizes the grants awarded.

	District of Columbia		National Capital Region	
	Award¹	Percent of total	Award²	Percent of total
FY 2003	\$17.9M	0.9%	\$60.5M	10.3%
FY 2004	\$18.8M	0.9%	\$31.9M	4.7%
FY 2005	\$12.5M	0.9%	\$77.5M	9.1%
FY 2006	\$7.4M	0.8%	\$46.5M	6.3%
Total	\$56.7M	0.9%	\$216.4M	7.6%

These funds, which represent significant amounts to be sure, have helped and will continue to help the District and the region enhance preparedness. In the District, the funds have supported training and exercising for numerous disaster scenarios, specialized response vehicles and equipment, and the development of a dedicated, secure, wireless data network. In the region, the funds have supported citizen preparedness education, the development of a syndromic surveillance system to monitor disease in illness, hospital surge beds and equipment, protective gear for first responders, virtual linkage of operations centers, public alert systems, and the development of a regional dedicated, secure, robust interoperable data communications system.

The foregoing examples of how we have invested federal funds to advance preparedness demonstrate the tangible gains the funds have provided. But it is important to note that the lion's share of homeland security funding is provided by us at the state and local level. Local funds primarily support the first responders in the region and their basic equipment. Local funds primarily support the management infrastructure that plans and implements homeland security policy and operations. Local funds primarily support the basic infrastructure upon which all preparedness functions reside. While federal funds provide the critical resources to enhance capabilities, local funds provide their foundation.

The significant local and federal funds that have enabled us to build and sustain capability might beg the question of whether more resources are needed. The answer to that question is clearly yes. Preparedness is a dynamic and complex process. We have some of the most experienced professionals in the District and the region working every day to improve our safety and security and their efforts should give comfort to those who live, work, or visit here. But we remain a high-risk area and we have significant unmet needs across all four mission areas of preparedness: prevention, protection, response, and recovery. Much of the post-9/11 activity focused on response, but the recent alleged terrorist arrests in Canada demonstrate the importance of prevention and the current state of New Orleans demonstrates the importance of recovery. We remain a high risk city and region and we consequently have significant unmet need.

Homeland Security Need

¹ Amounts shown are for the two major state grant programs: State Homeland Security and Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention.

² Amounts shown are for the Urban Area Security Initiative grant program.

We have worked to assess our level of preparedness in a number of ways so that we can continue to improve and enhance the safety and security of the nation's capital. Last year we undertook strategic planning process for both the District and the region to bring together stakeholders from all levels of government and from the private and nonprofit sectors to chart the course for future preparedness. As part of the grant application process, we evaluated ourselves with respect to over a dozen of the Target Capabilities defined in the National Preparedness Goal. Although the District of Columbia was among the first jurisdictions in the country to receive accreditation as part of the Emergency Management Assessment Process, the entire region recently underwent the assessment process to identify inter-jurisdictional gaps. And both the District and the region participated in the National Plan Review, the results of which were announced just last week, to guide improvements to catastrophic planning capability. As a result of all of these activities, we have identified significant areas of need to make the District and the region safer and more secure.

It is within that larger context that we developed our applications for the FY 2006 Homeland Security Grant Program. We undertook comprehensive, exhaustive processes involving expert practitioners from across the District and region to articulate the priority needs to safeguard and secure us all. These stakeholders included police chiefs, fire chiefs, transportation directors, hospital managers, emergency management experts from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, and others from all levels of government. Many of these stakeholders are the same people that responded to the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon, to the anthrax and sniper attacks, and to Hurricane Isabel. They are the people in whom the country places its trust for the protection of major national events, such as State Funerals and State of the Union Addresses. The effort and expertise we exerted to develop our applications were significant.

In the District, we identified over \$37 million in need across nine investment areas as follows.

<u>Investment Area</u>	<u>Allocation</u>
Incident Response	\$2.65M
Citizen Preparedness	\$1.85M
Critical Infrastructure Protection	\$1.05M
Information Sharing	\$3.57M
Interoperable Communications	\$2.52M
Law Enforcement Investigation & Operations	\$6.43M
Mass Care	\$0.97M
Medical Surge and Mass Prophylaxis	\$0.63M
Planning	\$2.15M
Total	\$21.82M

Specific projects within those investment areas included the following.

- Planning, training, and exercising in such areas as the National Incident Management System, continuity of operations, chemical/biological/radiological/nuclear weapons detection and response, pandemic flu, special needs populations, etc.
- Citizen preparedness activities, with focus on reaching youth, businesses, and special needs populations through training, emergency plan templates, updated preparedness materials, etc.
- Evacuation shelter planning, coordination, and provisioning, including volunteer/donation management
- Critical infrastructure identification, assessment, prioritization, and protection
- Stand-up of an intelligence fusion center, currently under development via guidance from the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice
- Continued support for our dedicated, wireless public safety data communications system, which supports local and federal agencies during major events
- Elevation of specialized unit (air support, water support, emergency response, civil disturbance, etc.) response to Tier 1, consistent with Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5
- Prophylaxis stockpiling

For the region, we identified more than \$250 million in need across twelve investment areas as follows.

<u>Investment Area</u>	<u>Allocation</u>
CBRNE Detection	\$5.25M
Critical Infrastructure Protection	\$26.25M
Citizen Preparedness and Participation	\$10.00M
Citizen Protection	\$11.00M
Critical Resource Logistics and Distribution	\$21.00M
Explosive Device Response	\$9.45M
Intelligence/Information Sharing/Dissemination	\$10.05M
Interoperable Communications	\$42.00M
Law Enforcement Investigation & Operations	\$11.55M
Mass Care	\$5.00M
Mass Prophylaxis	\$3.67M
Medical Surge	\$6.30M
Planning	\$15.22M
WMD/Hazardous Materials Response & Decon	\$11.50M
Total	\$188.24M

Specific projects within those investment areas included the following.

- Improved underground communications, specialized rescue equipment, and a back-up operations control center for the Metro rail/bus system
- Enhanced capability for the region's bomb squads, to provide capability to respond to multiple attacks

- Completion of projects to enable sharing of and field access to fingerprint, arrest, and other law enforcement data; mass casualty patient data; etc.
- Coordination of jurisdictional operational plans (response, evacuation, mass care, etc.)
- Planning to enhance preparedness of special needs populations and regional capability to respond with respect to these populations
- Surge hospital beds and related equipment
- Continued development of the region's model interoperable communications system

Risk and Effectiveness Process

The process we undertook was defined by a new approach to homeland security funding developed by the Department of Homeland Security. That process was firmly grounded in the National Preparedness Goal and used a risk-based approach to allocate funds. I strongly support the intended direction of the Department through its use of this new process. The National Preparedness Goal provides a uniform framework within which we can work across the country to secure our homeland; and given limitations on resources, it makes sense to do so on a risk-adjusted basis.

The Department of Homeland Security applied its risk-based approach by performing a risk assessment of each state (including the District of Columbia) and each major urban area (including the National Capital Region). These assessments were done at the federal level and, according to documents provided by the Department of Homeland Security, analyzed each area on dimensions of threat, vulnerability, and consequence. The Department of Homeland Security did not share the data used nor the results of these risk assessments.

The Department also evaluated the effectiveness of the proposals submitted by the states and urban areas by use of a peer-review process that assessed applications and their component parts on such dimensions as relevance, sustainability, and innovativeness. As we understand it, the combination of the risk and effectiveness analyses determined the allocation of the funds. Thus, with the inclusion of the effectiveness element, states and urban areas were in effect directly competing with one another for FY 2006 homeland security funds.

The funds for which we were now competing were fewer than in the previous fiscal year. The federal FY 2006 budget included a greater than \$600 million decline in homeland security grants funds available to state and local governments compared to what was available in FY 2005. So before the Department of Homeland Security started its analysis, it had fewer funds to grant. While we understood that fewer funds were available, we assumed that with a publicly stated commitment to a more risk-based approach, the District and the region would receive a higher proportion, if not amount, of the funds than we had in the previous fiscal year due to the clearly high level of risk we face.

Funding Allocation Results

We were surprised, therefore, to learn two weeks ago this morning that the awards to the District and the region were 40% less than the previous year. In the District, we received 53.5% less in the main state program, the State Homeland Security Grant Program, compared to the program's national decline of 50.3%. In the region, we received 40% less in the Urban Area Security Initiative, far greater than the program's national decline of 14.3%. The following table summarizes the awards relative to the needs.

FY 2006	District of Columbia	National Capital Region
Identified need	\$37.1M	\$254M
Proposed funding	\$21.8M	\$188M
<i>Award</i>	<i>\$7.4M</i>	<i>\$46.5M</i>

The amounts proposed were based on prioritizations of the needs we identified. They represented the amounts we believed we could responsibly execute during the grant performance period. While we did not necessarily expect to receive funding for the full amounts proposed, we certainly anticipated amounts greater than those awarded. Our expectation was built upon the understanding that the Department was moving to a more risk-based approach, which we inferred would direct more funds to the District and the region due to the high-risk environment for which we are obligated to prepare.

While we have not yet received comprehensive explanations for the surprising funding amounts, we did receive a document each for the District and the region providing the outcomes of the grant allocation process. Through those documents we learned the following.

- For the District of Columbia, seat of the federal government, home of the Capitol, the White House, the Supreme Court, FBI Headquarters, the Homeland Security Operations Center, the Washington Monument, and countless other national icons and critical federal functions, the Department of Homeland Security determined that we face less risk than 75% of the nation's states and territories. Further, they found our proposal to be in the bottom 50% in terms of effectiveness.
- For the National Capital Region, the Department of Homeland Security found the region to be in the top 25% in terms of risk relative to the nation's other eligible urban areas. The effectiveness of our proposal was found to be in the bottom 25%.

The risk measures are puzzling for the following reasons. For the District, it simply does not square with anything any of us know about the global environment relative to the nation's capital that the District of Columbia is a relatively low-risk state. For the region, a press release from the Department of Homeland Security affirmed its high-risk situation, stating that it was in the 97th percentile nationwide. Yet, even with risk supposedly counting for two-thirds of the equation that determined funding allocation, the region received a significantly and disproportionately lower amount of funds than in the previous year, a year in which the Department of Homeland security had previously stated that it had improved its risk analysis.

The effectiveness assessments are puzzling for two main reasons. First, for both the District and the region, the information provided by the Department of Homeland Security showed almost every element of the proposals to be at or above average. And a senior

Homeland Security official told a Congressional committee last week emphatically and repeatedly that our proposal was sound. Second, and more noteworthy, the experts who provided the analysis that led to the development of the application and who provided the content for it are among the most experienced managers, planners, and responders in the country. As I previously stated, these are the people who responded to the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon, to the anthrax and sniper attacks, and to Hurricane Isabel. These experts have responded successfully in these and many other incidents despite the complex nature of the National Capital Region due to their high level of expertise and professionalism and to the extensive coordination and collaboration that occurs here every day. That their peers from across the country could find our application lacking in terms of effectiveness is therefore perplexing.

Conclusions

We fully support the intent of the Department of Homeland Security to move to a more objective, transparent, and risk-based approach to the allocation of scarce resources to protect our homeland. The outcomes from this year's process, however, call the Department's success in meeting its intent into question. Specifically, we have to question two fundamental aspects of the process that led to the allocations that served as the impetus for the hearing.

First, is the risk analysis used by the Department of Homeland Security adequately assessing the relative risks faced by the cities and states of our country? When analysis finds the District of Columbia to be low risk, which results in less funding than provided to any other state in the union, including less populous ones, the viability of the analysis is questionable.

Second, is a peer-review process to determine effectiveness an appropriate basis for the allocation of funds to secure our homeland? Put simply, if an area is high risk, but the approach in its proposal was found to be less than effective; would the federal government not better advance the security of the homeland by working with the area to improve its approach than by reducing its funding?

I will close by making two important points about the impact of the recently announced homeland security grant awards for the District of Columbia and the National Capital Region. First, the region will not be less safe and secure, and will not face more risk as a result of funding levels considerably lower than last year. We had capabilities in place prior to 9/11 and have built significant additional capabilities since. Generally speaking, those capabilities are in place and will not diminish. But second, with the announced funding award, we will not be able to continue to improve our capability, and therefore our preparedness, as much or as quickly as we had expected. Certain priority improvements, such as many of those listed earlier in this testimony, will not get done, at least not as soon as we would have liked.

Regardless of how much funding we receive, we will provide the best and most professional response possible and will continue to endeavor daily to safeguard and secure the region. The amount of funding announced compared to what we have previously received merely challenges our ability to do so.